

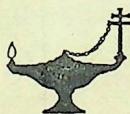
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IN THE LIGHT OF THE LAMP

A Phantasy by

BARCLAY BARON

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Foreword

To readers who are not members of Toc H it may be necessary to explain that the symbol of the movement, held by every Branch and used at every meeting for the brief ceremony of silent Remembrance, is a bronze "Lamp of Maintenance," which is modelled on an early Christian pattern, but with the Double Cross of Ypres standing on the handle.

With the exception of the cases of "The Innkeeper" and "The General," none of the "speaking parts" in the following pages are put into the mouths of actual persons, nor is any specific occasion to be recognised in any scene save that of the Guildhall.

Although the episodes are written in dramatic form, it is obvious that few, if any of them, could be reproduced on stage or screen. The verses which close each of them, and are collected in the form of a hymn at the end, are, however, capable of being sung, if anyone should wish to do so. It will be found for instance, that the fine tunes *Donne Secours*, composed for the Genevan Psalter of 1551 (*English Hymnal*, No. 564), or the 18th-century *Zu meinem Herrn*, by J. Schicht (*English Hymnal*, No. 119), will fit the words well.

The complete form of the ancient Christian Hymn ("Joyful Light") which is paraphrased in the two verses at the end of the first episode, is finely suited for use as a form of praise: the translation is as follows:

"O joyful Light of the Holy Glory of the Everlasting Father which is in Heaven, Holy and Beloved Jesus Christ, our Lord. We are come unto the going down of the sun, and at eventide we have seen light. Therefore we give thanks and praise to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit of God. Worthy art Thou at all times to be praised with holy voices, Son of God, that givest life. Therefore doth the world glorify Thee. Amen."

B.B.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE LAMP

I.—FAITH

TIME: *In the 3rd Century A.D.*

SCENE: *A cellar in ROME. The only light, coming dimly down a flight of stone steps at the end, is just able to reveal the low, brick-vaulted roof and mud floor, and the pale faces and soiled garments of a dozen people assembled. There are several women, one with a child asleep in her arms, but for the most part they appear to be young men. They stand in a group, speaking in low voices. Individual speakers are not distinguishable in the dim light.*

FIRST VOICE: Trophimus is dead. They bound him to a barrel of pitch and burnt him yesterday.

A WOMAN'S VOICE: (*Very low.*) I saw him caught by the crowd and was near when he died, but I could do nothing.

ANOTHER VOICE: He would have been eighteen years old to-day. He was a very good friend to me, and I can't bear to think of him dead. I can't believe he is really dead.

A FOURTH VOICE: (*Deeper and stronger.*) You do him wrong to be sorry. He is not dead, for the Gospel goes on.

The light is almost completely blocked by the figure of a man coming down the steps into the cellar. The company makes way for him, then turns to face the darkness at the far end where he has taken his stand. Absolute silence falls until it is broken by the sharp sound of a flint as a spark is struck. The spark becomes a tiny flame which rises, at first uncertainly and then more strongly, from a Lamp held by an old man. The Lamp is of bronze and of the common household boat-shape, but from the handle of it stands up a slender bronze cross. It sheds a golden glow on the little company, while all the vault behind them is filled with huge shadow. The grey-bearded man hands the lamp to one much younger, who moves to put it on a stone ledge—an altar, it may be—in the wall: as the Lamp passes, the child in his mother's arms wakes and holds out his hands to it with a cry of delight.

At the same time all those assembled begin to chant "The Hymn of Light." As they sing, their faces shine with an indescribable and contagious joy.

THE HYMN

O joyful Light, O glory of the Father,
Holy, beloved Jesu Christ, our Lord!
Now without fear we see the darkness gather,
For that on us Thy evening light is poured.
Therefore to Thee be praises and thanksgiving,
Father and Son and Comforter Divine;
We lift our voice and sing, with all things living,
Giver of Life, the Glory that is Thine.

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II.—SACRIFICE

TIME: *A winter's night, 1917.*

SCENE: FLANDERS, a trench before YPRES. A little snow is falling through the darkness, and the rim of the parados shows white now and again as a star shell goes up from the enemy's line in front. In a dug-out, merely a deepish hole scraped sideways into the wall of the trench, a young officer ("Binks" to his friends) is sitting, hunched up, his tin hat touching the sloping roof. One leg sticks out under the mackintosh sheet which is pegged across the entrance as a curtain against the snow, and the boot is pretty well submerged in the mud at the bottom of the trench: on his other knee, drawn up close under his chin, he holds a scrap of paper on which he is trying to write. A stump of candle, stuck on the corner of an ammunition box, the only "furniture" of the dug-out, shows him up in grotesque light and shadow—a tired, unshaven face, shapeless, mud-caked uniform, and a hand, with two fingers bound with a dirty bandage, moving across the paper.

Suddenly there is a very "confused noise without," and he pulls in his out-stretched leg sharply.

BINKS: What the hell——! (Pushing back the curtain and peering out at a figure sprawling in the mud a few feet away.) O sorry, Sergeant. If you and I'd only been born rats, we'd manage this job better.

SERGEANT: Yessir. Good-night, sir.

Moves on up the trench with a sucking of boots in the mud. Binks returns to writing, stops, bites his pencil, and frowns. The next moment the corner of the curtain is lifted and another young officer begins to crawl into the dug-out.

BINKS: Cheerio, Mac. Hi! look out for the lighting set. (Pointing to the candle.) You'd better hold it.

MAC: Gad, what a night! Those poor devils in t'other platoon are having it a lot worse, regular stuck to each other with mud. Young Davis's got himself sniped in the head—baddish. Playing the goat, I s'pose, somehow. So I had to see to his fellows. (Catching sight of Binks's scrap of paper.) Binko, old dear, what are you up to? Writing to her in hexameters? Um-tiddy, Um-tum-tum?

BINKS: (Grinning a bit awkwardly.) That's the idea—well, no, not exactly. Sitting here so quiet and comfy makes a bloke think—until you came and dished it. Things run in your head. Writing oddments was a trick of mine at school. Verses—you know.

MAC: (Quite seriously.) Lor, yes—I know. What's got you this time?

BINKS: Do you remember Myers' "St. Paul"—long poem, deuce of a grand swing in it (*Mac nods*) and sense? Well, it's been running in my head in scraps all day.

MAC: Tell us.

BINKS: Well, you remember great old Paul is fighting—downing his old life? "Eager and afraid," he says, to "suffer with men and like a man be strong," and he can't get on with the War—only when he

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sees a big hope ahead—" Ah, what a hope, and when afar it glistens . . . " Do you remember?

MAC : (Nods.) Go on.

BINKS : Now and again he gets lost in No-man's Land, but he always gets his eye on to the objective again. It comes back to the same point with him as with me and you, Mac, in the long run—it's well (*pause*)—it's " Christ is the beginning, for the end is Christ." (*Mac nods, without looking at Binks, who goes on hurriedly.*) And there's a war on now, so the papers at home say, and sometimes this winter we've almost wondered what it was all about, and felt ready to pack up; And then, I s'pose, we've downed ourselves and stuck it like Paul. And more than stuck it—we've seen a hope for the whole blessed old world, some day or other, ahead. Seen it like a light—that's it, a light. Mac, do you know (*laughing*) I believe it was that blinking candle-end you've got in your hand that set me off on the tack of verses.

Suddenly there is a dull, distant report, followed immediately by a screaming as if the whole sky overhead had split across. The first shell bursts with a roar and a rattle of mud and splinters—short. Binks and Mac scramble out into the trench in the first grey of the morning, shouting " Stand to, men ! " The next follows before they have run a yard, blowing in the parapet a little way further on. Mac, for the instant blinded, staggers under the weight which has fallen into his arms. " Binko ! " he shouts aloud, but no voice answers from the smashed face close under his own. Mechanically he takes a crumpled scrap of paper out of a dead hand : if ever he has time to read it he will know a part of what Binks was trying to say.

All through the night, whatever storm assail us—
Passion or pain, despair and shame and loss,
Thou, till the day, wilt hold and never fail us,
Victor before us of the bitter Cross.

Never the path so lost but in Thee only
Trusting we——

III.—H O P E

TIME : Beginning of March, 1918. Late at night.

SCENE : A little room on the first floor of a house in POPERINGHE, Flanders. The room is very full of things—a desk littered with open letters, books and papers, with a half-eaten apple and a mouth-organ, catching the eye, among them ; rather too many decrepit arm-chairs ; a bloated kit-bag, oddments of equipment and a pair of gum-boots on the floor in one corner ; the walls irregularly dotted with a medley of pictures, photographs of men in uniform and typewritten "routine orders " of various kinds pinned up ; the mantelpiece, over which hangs a small crucifix, is a hospital for hard-worn pipes. All these things, seen in the shaded light of an oil lamp, make an immediate impression, not of confusion, but of familiarity and friendliness.

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Two men are sitting near the hearth, on which the fire is burning low among ashes. One, tilting his chair, is noticeably broad of beam, with round spectacles on a round face. He wears a very seedy blue college blazer, khaki shorts and puttees. He is the Innkeeper of this queer Hostelry of Emmans. The other, very boyish looking, sits on the floor with his back to the mantelpiece, playing restlessly with the poker. He wears corporal's uniform.

CORPORAL: It's been the same old trouble ever since I left the works.

What would you do, Tubby, if you were me?

THE "INNKEEPER": Dear old man, I'd write to the governor. You've got to put it straight.

(Diving into the litter on the desk, and fishing up simultaneously a sheet of paper and an envelope and the half-eaten apple. He resumes the latter, and throws the paper into his companion's lap.) Do it now, and I'll post it. You'll be glad afterwards. Bless you!

The door opens and a private soldier comes in, a spare little man, obviously very tired but very cheerful. He balances two cups of tea in his hand.

THE "INNKEEPER": Dear Gen., you're a perfect angel!

THE "GENERAL": You ought to be in bed, and you know it. I'll have the M.O. on your track in the mornin'. Here's a drop of tea to be goin' on with. (Passes the other cup down to the Corporal, who smiles up at him.) There's a Captain in the Worcesters just come in, off leave—walked up from "Hopout." He wanted to see you particular, but I told him to doss down in the Library because you was asleep.

THE "INNKEEPER": I'll go to sleep when I have seen him—honest. Send him along, Gen. (The two old friends smile at one another, the "Innkeeper" with comic humility and the "General" trying to be stern. He goes out. A minute later the door opens again, and a Captain well over six-foot, moustached, aged about 35, comes eagerly in. The "Innkeeper" jumps up to meet him. The Corporal makes a move to rise, but the "Innkeeper" pushes him back.)

THE "INNKEEPER": Beloved Mac! Where in the world did you spring from?

CAPTAIN: Blighty. I got special leave, when it was too late to help much.

THE "INNKEEPER": What's wrong? The Corporal won't mind you talking. And here's some tea, specially made for you. (Pushes his cup across the desk.)

CAPTAIN: Well, you remember when I got married, because you had always meant to marry us yourself. A fortnight ago the kiddie came—before his time. It was an air-raid that did it. They wired, and I had a deuce of a job getting home. Mil had been fighting for days—because she wanted to see me just once again. My God, Tubby, I didn't know people could suffer like that! I got home—and she died. Same night.

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THE "INNKEEPER": (*Quietly.*) Mac! (He puts his arm round him, holding him tight. They stand quite silent in the middle of the room. After a long pause.) And the kiddie?

CAPTAIN: (*Throwing up his head abruptly.*) O, the boy's glorious. I thought I couldn't stick seeing him at first. But he's a wonder. I expect I'm about finished: it don't much matter anyhow. But he's going to make good when all this bloody show's over.

THE "INNKEEPER": Dear old Mac! And you're going to take him in hand and show him how. That's what you're going to live for now, please God. Finish your tea, and then we're going upstairs to the Upper Room. We can see the way through plainer up there. He turns towards the fire: beside it, sprawling sideways on the floor, the Corporal lies fast asleep. A sealed and addressed envelope is in his hand. The "Innkeeper" pushes an old cardigan gently under his head, and takes the letter from him. He and the Captain go out, closing the door behind them.

The sleeper stirs, smiles without opening his eyes, and settles down again. The friendly little room is very still, and upon everything in it—the worn out man, the open letters of friends, the portraits of the brotherhood in arms—the lamp sheds its comfortable golden light.

* * * *

The lamp begins to flicker, as though the oil were nearly spent. It sinks lower, until only the wick glows red. It is not extinguished, but the room is very dim. . . .

Then it flames up again and discloses the place once more. The surroundings are familiar and yet somehow changed. The Time is, as before, night in early March—but two crowded years have passed between. The Scene is still "Emmaus Inn," "Everyman's Club," but it has moved its quarters from the Rue de l'Hôpital at Poperinge to RED LION SQUARE, in the heart of LONDON. It is a larger room than before, panelled to the ceiling. A fire burns cheerfully in the grate at the further end, and before it are drawn up several arm-chairs and a large sofa; above it the old-fashioned mantelpiece is crowded with photographs of old friends.

As the scene opens the onlooker must step aside to let pass half a dozen men who are crowding out of the door, with much laughter and shouts of "Cheerio!" A deep voice, somewhere in the room, can be heard answering "Good-night, Creatures!" The last footsteps die out on the uncarpeted stairs several floors below, leaving the room very quiet. It is in the possession of two people—the "Innkeeper," who is holding the half-unwilling Corporal by the arm. Both are in nondescript civilian coats, khaki collars, and grey flannel trousers.

THE CORPORAL: (*Who looks ill.*) I must really go, Tubby.

THE "INNKEEPER": Where to, old boy?

THE CORPORAL: Well, I don't quite know, to tell you the truth.

THE "INNKEEPER": (*Laughing.*) Then you shan't go there. You're going to bed (*pushing him on to a sofa*), and you're not to talk any more shop: we'll fix up all that business in the morning. I'm going to

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read to you. (He takes a half-finished apple and a small green book from the mantelpiece, stretches himself on the hearthrug, propped on one elbow, and begins to read and eat alternately.) "I saw in my dream that the Interpreter took him by the hand, and led him into a little room . . ." (He goes on for some minutes reading from "The Pilgrim's Progress," turning over a page or two at a time; there is no other sound save the rattle of a late—or early—tram, coming and going, in Theobalds Road, behind the house. He stops reading and breaks into a deep chuckle, rumbling on and on.) I say, isn't that perfectly glorious! (There is no answer from the sofa, for the Corporal has fallen fast asleep. The "Innkeeper" stands up, crosses to a door on the right and opens it softly. The sight to which it gives access is that of a man in his shirt-sleeves bending over a gas-cooker, and the sound and smell are of sausages frying.)

THE "INNKEEPER": Gen., you bad man! Why aren't you in bed?

THE "GENERAL": (Turning round scornfully.) If you've forgotten about your supper, I haven't. It'll be ready in two shakes. (At this moment the main door of the room opens, and a man under 40, six-foot tall and moustached, walks in. The very shabby trench coat he is wearing over "civvy" clothes is soaking wet, and he throws it off with a grimace.)

THE "INNKEEPER": (Turning quickly.) Beloved Mac! How on earth did you get here?

THE CAPTAIN: The lads left the street door open, I suppose. Anyway, here I am, and thundering glad too. Been tramping the blessed streets all day. That job I told you about didn't come off, and I'm getting a bit desperate.

THE "INNKEEPER": Well then, something's got to be done about it. Come and talk to me. But how jolly! My heart was in my boots at the prospect of wasting the night by having to go to bed. By the way, we've kept a sausage for you specially. (Shouts.) Gen.!

VOICE FROM BEHIND A DOOR: Half a mo', can't you!

All is well. Let us leave them to it.

Never the path so lost but in Thee only

Trusting we see, and, seeking, find a way;
Strength of the tempted, Brother of the lonely,
Out of our darkness bringest Thou the day.

IV.—FELLOWSHIP

TIME: About 10 in the evening of December 15th, 1922. A Birthday Celebration.

SCENE: THE GUILDHALL of the City of London. The great hall, like a cathedral in some time of thanksgiving, is crowded with standing figures, mainly of men. They are of every county and of every kind, elder and much younger, richer and poorer, distinguished from each other by every accident of birth, schooling and livelihood, but in purpose this night they are one together. Facing them,

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and raised up so as to fill all the space beneath the huge eastern window of the hall, nearly two hundred of their fellows stand, three deep, in a hollow square. Each front-rank man of these holds, breast-high, a lighted bronze Lamp, of the common boat shape which was in household use in Roman times : from its handle stands up a bronze double cross. Behind this palisade of light rises a forest of standards, held by rear rank men, each standard the Roman cartouche in purple, black and gold, and on each is blazoned the name of some city. Marshalled behind every separate lamp and name the onlooker must picture a family of men, too numerous to stand there to-night, and all the families embraced in one fellowship. Two greater standards—one gold, one silver—stand guard in the centre of the square : the names above them, shining through wreaths of laurel, are Poperinghe and Ypres. Between them, small but very clearly seen, one of the Brotherhood stands alone—The Prince of Wales. The gold and silver gleams and clouds on the face of the standards, as the bands that hold them shift, and all the streamers, black and gold, which hang down from them, are gently moved by the breath of the many flames of the lamps below. This whole pageant of living colour and the light which keeps the eyes of the crowd in the hall, is enclosed, as in a great casket, by the dark panels of carved and columned oak upon the Guildhall walls.

A Voice finishes speaking—“ *Lux Aeterna!* ”—“ Everlasting light ! ” The immense chandeliers which blaze above the heads of the crowd sink into sudden darkness : only the light of the little lamps, throwing up the faces of the men that hold them under the wing of enormous shadow above, remains. At the same moment the music of the “ Last Post ” breaks in slowly, very faint and far-off, sounding, a man might believe, across some star-curtained plain and over the quiet resting places of men who have earned sleep. It fills the hall, pervades to every moulded corner, holds every listening man’s heart, full of things remembered, believed in, hoped for. At last, after intolerable intervals of waiting, the last note, the highest clear sound of the bugle, slips away into silence—silence, the world standing still between Remembrance and Looking Forward. . . .

Then “ Reveille,” loud, startling to action, joyful. Awake from sleep and heaviness, arise from the dead ! The call rings from end to end of the hall, ranges through the open-timbered roof ; all the lights blaze into life again. Someone listening may hear, perhaps, an answering singing—

Lo, having Thee, we lose not one another,
Sundered—united, dying but to birth ;
All worlds are one in Thee, O more than Brother,
One is our family in Heaven and Earth.

V.—SERVICE

TIME : *A late afternoon in the spring of 1923.*

SCENE : *A small bed-sitting room in suburban apartments in MANCHESTER.* The room is poorly furnished with necessities, but is dotted with objects which

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are not useful and only too ornamental, some of them broken and all of them shabby. The only things which seem to betray the identity of the present occupier are a few books, a hockey stick in one corner, photographs—presumably of a father and a sister—flanking the usual picture of Blackpool bound in red plush on the mantelpiece, and a school football cap which adorns the corner of a framed oleograph of Chillon over the bed. The occupier himself, a young man of 18-19, sits at a table in the window, reading a book in the fading light. After a minute or two he puts the book down and takes a turn across the narrow room, his hands in his pockets, whistling a snatch of the "Beggar's Opera" under his breath. Then he stoops to light a reading lamp—one of those candlesticks with a metal monk's hood—pulls out a writing-pad and sits down at the table. He begins to write a letter, and the onlooker is permitted to look over his shoulder into the little circle of candle-light which takes in his face and his handiwork, and to observe the movements of his pen.

My dear Old Jonathan (*he writes*),

I am fed-up. I have tried all resources (which doesn't mean much in this establishment) and come to the last desperate resort of writing to you. What a lazy swine I am!—I have carried your topping letter about in my pocket for weeks, meaning to answer it, but there is always a good excuse ready, e.g., I don't know what day the African Mail goes—I don't know yet, but I will risk it this evening.

Your letter made me long almost fiercely to get out of this hole and see "life." I was reading R.L.S. ("South Sea Islands") a few minutes ago, and I could not help saying those fascinating names like Butaritari and Paaeaia aloud to myself: they made me regularly homesick for a land I have never seen. Perhaps it is because the spring is coming on and gets right into my blood in spite of the Manchester smuts. I must restrain myself and tell you the news. There isn't much really, though it may be news to you. As you know, Dad died last summer, and when we came to reckon up we found he had left very little. So I had to chuck the notion of Oxford, and got a job up here through one of Dad's old friends. I suppose it was a wangle, anyway it was lucky. "Something in the city" with me means a stool with a ledger in front of it: "we" purvey artificial manure and cotton-cake, though I couldn't tell you what either looks like. Mother has taken a poky flat in Cheltenham, because Helen is at school down there. So I am an independent gent. on 30 bob a week, more or less. So much for the facts.

But I feel that the real news is about my inside self, and I don't pretend to understand it very clearly. It is all so ludicrously different from what I had planned—Rugger (perhaps even a Blue), and reading (perhaps even a First), and then, rather vaguely, a "literary career." And here we are in Manchester, in digs—my hat, this digs business! You know all about it—the landlady and the cat, which stand for the devil and the deep sea as far as double-dealing goes. And, most of all, the sheer loneliness of it, after school and the old holidays we used to have. I

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didn't know a soul in this place when I came and I did not make one real friend (until last week), which may have been my fault. Your tramp up-country in British East with those niggers is nothing to Manchester for solitude. It is all these thousands of faces which meet you in the street every morning and don't really care a damn whether you live or die. I must restrain myself again, John! But I can *almost* understand how some fellows I meet up here snatch at ways out—whisky and those harpy women (poor devils, I dare say they are the loneliest of the lot). I believe I have nearly done it myself once or twice this winter. But I haven't done it, and now I know I am not going to. (*He stops writing for a moment and leans back.*) Near thing! (*he says aloud to the candle. He returns to writing again.*)

I have found another way out. Queer, I suppose, and quite unexpected. Do you remember a chap, one of these itinerant missionary Johnnies, that came down to school our last term and talked about "Social Service"? The old gag, of course, but with a new kink in it somewhere. In fact, we honestly thought there was something in it, though, *of course*, we were a bit superior-like about it in the dormitory afterwards. Well, apparently old Fizz at school was in league with the man and gave him my name, when I left, as a likely conspirator. Anyway I got a typewritten letter from them, which I meant to answer and somehow lost. Did you get one? That was the first act—rather a slow one. The second was terribly rapid. A week ago in walks the young man from the shop where I buy my socks (when I can afford 'em) and shook hands before I could collect my well-known distant manner, and told me I was probably "a latent member of Toc H"! He talked continuously for half an hour and by the end he was the nearest thing to a friend that I have struck in Lancashire yet. Anyway I promised to look him up at their club place two nights after. John (how you *will* laugh!), I got into a tram last Wednesday as ever is, as innocent as you please, crossed the doormat of Toc H—and found myself ter-apped! Yes, kidnapped, bowled over, swallowed up in one of the best crowds you and I will ever strike. I really can't tell you all about the show in a merc letter—it would cost too much in stamps before I had finished. But read the tract I am going to put in before this is posted, picture the "Guest-night" business, and poor little me singing ludicrous songs in the middle of it all.

And there is more to the comedy. Some of them live on the spot, in a real big house, with a tennis court and all attached, and I am to clear out of this forsaken bedder and become one of the Toc H "family" in ten days' time. Even that isn't the end of it. One of the heads, quaintly called the "Jobmaster," got up during the evening, said something about a Boys' Club in trouble, and called for volunteers. I was so braced up about the whole show that night that I shot my hand up and was on his little list before I had thought about it. By Jove, they don't waste

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time! The very next night (that was the day before yesterday) I was led there by the arm, and more or less told to get on with it. At any rate in a few weeks, they say, if I am a good boy, I *may* be given a trial trip as "Assistant Manager of the St. Luke's Lads' Club"—what think you of that?

But, seriously, John (you know I can't be serious for long), it is amazing how this thing catches you. I have found a whole string of friends—queerest mixture of trades you ever saw in your life, but no one is allowed to make class distinctions in this show; why should they? And I've found a *home*. And I've found a "way out"—a job that swallows every ounce of my spare time. I suppose this is the "Social Service" the Johnnie preached about so oddly that day in the Sixth Form room—but, for heaven's sake, don't call it that when you write back to chip me about the whole affair! For it seems far too natural to have a name like that. It is just the St. Luke's Boys and me all mixed up in the "Toc H spirit"—if you know what that means. I am beginning to find out. In fact, I must go on beginning this very minute; I am due down at the club at 7.15—to take a "run" out along the tramlines of Manchester.

So long, old man. Write soon. Sorry this is such a confusing letter.
Yours ever,

SMIKE.

P.S.—Wash out all the stuff at the beginning about being fed-up. It was true ten days ago, but it doesn't really fit now.

He addresses and stamps the envelope, bundles some things—shorts, a vest and a pair of gym. shoes—into a bag, blows out the candle, and rushes out of the room.

O Light of Light, who givest also laughter,
Master of men, who setteth servants free,
We build Thy House for them that follow after,
Serving the brethren in service unto Thee.

VI.—L O V E

TIME: *A summer evening in August, 1924.*

SCENE: *A pathway along the edge of broken cliffs. The sun has just set in the sea, leaving a marvellous, changeful glory on the western sky. A large party of boys, dressed in shorts and a great variety of bright-coloured football shirts, are wandering, strung out, along the pathway. As they walk they shout comic insults up and down the column, laugh a great deal, and sing in snatches. At the tail of the column come two men, one older than the other, also dressed in shorts and bareheaded. The older one is limping: finally he stops and sits down, dangling his legs over the cliff-edge. The boys go on: one of them looks back and calls out, "Old Mac's packed up!" to the rest, who laugh.*

MAC: Step short a bit, SMike. This blister is giving me gip. We needn't get into Camp for half an hour.

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SMIKE : Well, I don't mind myself. What do you suppose we've done ?
Ten miles ? (*Thrusts his hands into the pockets of his shorts and pulls out a pipe and a pouch. He sits down beside Mac.*)

MAC : Pretty nearly, I guess. By Jove (*nodding at the sky*) that's better than last night even !

SMIKE : Makes you wish all the lads in England were out here—with all the footballs in Manchester.

MAC : (*Laughing.*) Well, you can be commandant for *that* Camp, instead of me, Michael. Sixty from St. Luke's is enough to go on with. Which reminds me—we must play off the second round of the tent cricket between the bathes to-morrow. (*He lies back on the grass, his hands behind his head, looking up into the darkening sky. In the distance the boys can be heard shouting a chorus as they march into Camp—*

O Roger-um ! O Roger-um ! Oooh !
Slingami—lingami—oreum,
O Rogerum !

SMIKE : Have you noticed young Jim Fuller of my tent the last day or two ? He's quite changed. He's going to be one of the most useful fellows in the Club by next Camp. I'm rather proud of him, for I've more or less brought him up this last six months or so in my spare time ; his people are no earthly good.

MAC : (*Chuckling.*) Changed ! Of course he's changed ; that's what the Club is there for. And you're a bit changed yourself—come to that—Smike, old son.

SMIKE : Well, I suppose I am. I date my transmogrification back eighteen months, to the night when Toc H kidnapped me. Of all the rummiest accidents——

MAC : There aren't any accidents in Toc H. Old-fashioned folk talk about Providence : you can call it what you like. I know—because I've had some. (*Smike makes no reply, but pulls at his pipe, gazing out to sea. Mac continues.*) Young Jim has changed, and we have changed, and the whole place is going to change one of these days. Look at all that fuss between our members and the Council over Pansy Court. That place is going to change so much that some day you'll be able to grow real pansies in it. Do you know why I've been so mad keen over Pansy Court, Smike ?

SMIKE : Well, I've wondered sometimes.

MAC : Two reasons, really : you may think 'em odd. The first was my own kiddie—he was six in March. I drew a picture of him one day, in my mind, living in Pansy Court instead of in our house—no air, no light, no room, not a spot of grass to knock about on, not enough water to wash in, roof full of holes, skirting full of bugs—you know as well as I do. The picture was so damned ugly that I said I'd

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change it. One kid is worth his rights as much as another—and I know what *my* lad's worth.

SMIKE : Good old Mac !

MAC : Rot ! That's just common sense—or Toc H sense, anyhow. And the second reason is a sort of a War Memorial, as you might say. There's hundreds of dear lads, better than us I fancy, Smike, who ought to have the same sort of memorial. But I was thinking of just one at the moment. He was a chap younger than me, just about your age, one of the very best. The Mess christened him Binks the first night he came to us in the salient. He would have been right in with us now if he hadn't got killed. Stupid business it was. He and I were just talking in a bit of a dug-out in the line one night. They dropped one, and a bit of the next one caught him in the head the moment we got into the trench. He used to tell me about his club, somewhere up Sheffield way. And then he'd talk about all he saw ahead *après la guerre*, and all he wanted to have a hand in, and where the old world was heading for. Five minutes before he got hit he was puzzling his nut about some verses on the subject—rum thing, in the line ! Well, when I go down Pansy Court I seem to see dear old Binko handling his pick along with the gang of house-breakers, pulling it all down. He and I are going to build up a bit of his dream there, please God. So now you see why, Smike.

SMIKE : Thanks awfully for telling me, Mac. I always felt that there was something special about you and the Pansy Court business. As you know, the rest of us are standing right in with you over that and the Club and the rest.

MAC : I know you are, old boy : the Branch is absolutely sound through and through. But have you ever asked yourself what's at the back of it all ? I mean, exactly why we bother so much ? It isn't just a series of stunts—all this service business in Toc H. It all hangs together, and it isn't the actual jobs that matter so much, I think, as the spirit. It's the freedom, and the conviction, and the open-mindedness and the jollity—O, and heaps more : you can't put the spirit of the show in a bottle and look at it. It's as old as the hills, and it's "new every morning," as the hymn has it. There were chaps the same age as you or me talking just the same as this in the catacombs at Rome, and it's gone on ever since. Only we get slack about it at moments and get done in, when we aren't looking, by the rich, tired, *old* people again and again, as Barrie says in that perfectly topping "Courage" speech—you know ? (*Smike shakes his head.*) My poor benighted Smike ! I've got it in my kit-bag in Camp, and you'll read it—commandant's orders—before you sleep to-night. (*He pauses to light his pipe.*) Yes, young Smike, you beware of the aged—that's me in a year or two. I dare say our Jim Fuller's father wasn't at all a bad lad until he was misunderstood and mishandled by the rich, tired people

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who couldn't bother to get at his point of view : as it is, he's been in gaol ever since, excepting the intervals when he lives in a house which is designed to drive a man to drink. And, as it is, he hates society, himself included. Just in the same way, as it is, the rich, tired, old people are busy watching the next war organize itself—if you and I don't stop them in time. And we others *can* stop them, Smike : I felt dead certain of that when I was standing on the Guildhall Platform at the Birthday show two years back. (*He gets up, preparing to go.*) Taking it all round, the best motto for the Toc H spirit is still "To conquer hate." In fact, why not be a bit bolder and call it the spirit of Christ ? It's Love that does the trick—nothing less. If we are out to change even a bit of the world, we want a pretty clear beacon to march by.

They turn to the pathway together. Stars are out overhead. Before their faces, a quarter of a mile away, the camp-fire flickers and glows brightly red in the clear darkness. Figures can be seen crowding round it, and bursts of singing are very distinctly heard. Smike, with one hand on Mac's shoulder, points to it.

SMIKE : How will that do, Mac ?

MAC : Good enough for me, old man.

He hobbles off in the direction of the light, with Smike following.

So shine in us, our little love reproving,
That souls of men may kindle at the flame ;
All the world's hatred, broken by our loving,
Shall bow to Love, Thine everlasting Name.

VII.—THANKSGIVING

TIME : *The evening of December 15th, A.D. 2015, being the hundredth birthday of Toc H.*

SCENE : *A great Cathedral, packed to the utmost with standing people. A very large proportion of them are young men. They are dressed in a strange, unknown fashion, simple yet very beautiful : each wears upon his breast a black badge on which his name is written in gold letters. No lights are burning in the nave of the church, and the slender stone shafts of the columns run up into a mysterious darkness where they meet the vaulting far overhead. To the onlooker, standing near the steps of the sanctuary, the faces of the vast congregation are plain, rank behind rank, for a glow like that of a great fire shines upon them from the sanctuary itself. This light is shed by many hundreds of little flames, each at the tip of a small bronze, boat-shaped Lamp. From each lamp also rises a slender double cross of bronze ; and all the crosses, erect in the midst of the glow, might seem to the fancy a field of flowers, or a cemetery, the aftermath of some century-old warfare, transfigured by the sun.*

The whole congregation, thousands of men's and boys' voices, is singing with a strong emotion ; and the emotion is joy. As they sing a considerable party of

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men, belated and apparently unnoticed, enter by the transept door and begin to take their places in front of the crowd. They, too, wear their names or nicknames on their breasts—read them, if you can, as they pass—“TROPHY” (perhaps oddly christened Trophimus), “BINKS,” “THE GEN.” “MAC,” “SMIKE” . . . One—noticeably broad of beam—with a smile behind spectacles, seems to guide them to their places. All eyes look across the blaze of lamplight to where, beyond and above it, standing out like a living, inescapable figure against the intense darkness of the eastern apse, a YOUNG MAN reigns over them from a Cross. Now they are singing:—

O joyful Light, O Glory of the Father,
Holy, beloved Jesu Christ, our Lord!
Now without fear we see the darkness gather,
For that on us Thy evening light is poured.

All through the night, whatever storm assail us—
Passion or pain, despair and shame and loss—
Thou, till the day, wilt hold and never fail us,
Victor before us of the bitter Cross.

Never the path so lost, but in Thee only
Trusting, we see, and, seeking, find a way:
Strength of the tempted, Brother of the lonely,
Out of our darkness bringest Thou the day.

Lo, having Thee, we lose not one another,
Sundered—united, dying but to birth;
All worlds are one in Thee, O more than Brother,
One is our family in Heaven and Earth.

O Light of Light, who givest also laughter,
Master of men, who settest servants free,
We build Thy House for them that follow after,
Serving the brethren in service unto Thee.

So shine in us, our little love reproving,
That souls of men may kindle at the flame;
All the world's hatred, broken by our loving,
Shall bow to Love, Thine everlasting Name.

Therefore to Thee be praises and thanksgiving,
Father and Son and Comforter Divine;
We lift our voice and sing, with all things living,
Giver of Life, the Glory that is Thine.